

Athletic Contests and Events Pools Act

veterans' pensions or other programs considered by the Government vital enough to be funded from the consolidated revenues of Canada would have to depend on the profits from gambling for funding.

What will this betting scheme support? Revenues from the sports pool are targeted not only for the Calgary Olympics but also to support arts and culture, fitness and amateur sports, worthy capital projects of national interest and medical and health research. Where will it end? It is a sad day when the future of Canadian health care depends on raffles and gambling schemes for funding.

Let us look at the facts. In the last ten years the federal Government has reduced substantially the proportion of funding it provides for medical research. In 1971 the federal Government provided 72 per cent of Government support for medical research. By 1979-80 that proportion had dropped to 59 per cent. With that trend in mind I think good questions to pose to the Government are: how much more will federal funding for medical research deteriorate? Will Canadians see the proportion of medical research support derived from federal tax revenues decline further when and if money is allocated from sports pool profits to medical and health research?

What we really have here is not funding for the Olympics. That is not the salient point of this Bill at all. What we have in Bill C-95 is an attempt by the Government to get back into the business of gambling on a permanent basis. It is an attempt to get back into the business of gambling, not only to finance the Olympic games but medical and health research, arts and culture and fitness and amateur sports as well. The scope of Bill C-95 is not limited to the Government's current desire to start a sports pool. A fact which should be remembered is that through clause (2)(b) of this Bill, the Government may embark on whatever gambling enterprise it deems lawful and desirable through order in council.

When the then Minister of Fitness and Amateur Sports, the present Minister of State for International Trade (Mr. Regan) who is introducing the Bill in the House today, was flogging this Bill to the media he argued that both the federal and provincial Governments need a non-tax source of revenue for certain undertakings. Lotteries and his proposed sports pools are his idea of a voluntary form of taxation. He has certainly put a pretty face on what amounts to abandoning fair taxation in favour of Government-run gambling. We should expect no less from a Government that has given us a Liberal advertising body called the Canada Unity Information Office.

What is the nature of the Minister's voluntary taxation—his non-tax source of revenue? For one thing, it is a form of taxation that takes proportionately more from the poor than it does from the rich. When one thinks about it, it is not really surprising that it is the poor and not the rich who fall for other Government betting schemes. Lotteries, this sports pool and other Government-run gambling are turning millions of Canadians into gamblers. The rags to riches, easy money outlook bred by lottery advertising is naturally appealing to poorer Canadians.

A 1977 profile commissioned by Loto Canada found that 54 per cent of the buyers of lottery tickets earned less than \$20,000 a year. A similar study conducted by Gallup found that 73 per cent of people who earned less than \$6,000 a year took part in Wintario. This is the clientele government betting schemes appeal to.

The Government Members will say, "What about bingo? Does the NDP want to get rid of bingo because it is a game of chance and appeals to the poor too?" No, we do not want to purge the country of bingo. We have nothing against bingo because bingo is totally unlike the lottery system. Bingos bring people together to participate in a social event, but buying a lottery ticket is an act consummated alone.

• (1550)

The main motivation behind buying a lottery ticket is to find a magic solution to all of one's economic problems. That is the pitch the Governments of this country have been selling in their aggressive marketing of lotteries in the past. The manager of one provincial lottery admitted as much. He said:

We base all our marketing strategy on greed. It is our big selling point. People do not buy tickets because they want to help a cause. They buy a ticket because they want to win.

There we have it. Thousands of Canadians are living in poverty or so close to poverty it amounts to basically the same thing, and the Government is giving them a crack at bettering their lot. Of course, no one is told what the incredible odds are of winning the big prize. In the Western Express, for example, the odds are one in 500,000. You have a more of a chance of being struck by lightning than you do of winning the grand prize in a Canadian lottery; and that will be no different with this sports pool.

The Government is trying to hoodwink people by claiming that this sports pool is really a game of skill. Simply predict correctly the final score of 12 to 16 hockey or baseball games and you can take home the big prize. Who do they think they are kidding? Instead of having the winning number selected by a computer, the winning ticket will be determined by chance, by the outcome of a dozen or more sporting contests. I do not know how that can be considered a game of skill. The chances of guessing correctly the outcome of a dozen or more hockey games could be as high as one in one trillion. With that many games involved in each pool, even the most knowledgeable sports fans would have stumbled across an incredible piece of luck if they picked the correct final score in every game.

Are you signalling that I have only a moment left, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Yes.

Mr. Sargeant: I will sum up by saying I think it has become obvious that we are opposed to this form of voluntary taxation. We are opposed to this piece of legislation and we will vote against it in the House when it comes to a vote.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, right now we are dealing with two amendments. I have a bit of a problem in following the Chair's ruling with respect to the grouping of Motions Nos. 1 and 3. First, Motion No. 1, and I